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In a statement, ANEEL cautioned however that the regulation of prepayment by the agency itself does not guarantee full implementation, since there are other aspects outside the jurisdiction of ANEEL that must be solved. The first one refers to the approval of the metrological technical regulation for prepayment meters by the National Institute of Metrology, Quality and Technology, INMETRO.

According to Anel president Romeu Rufino: "To be put into practice, the proposal needs to pass the relevant stages. But there is nothing standing in the way".

The regulations state that prepayment is optional for the consumer and is considered as an alternative to current metering options. Consumers can choose to move to prepaid metering, but are also free to move back to traditional metering "at any time, without a grace period, terms and costs.

Communication from ANEEL clarifies: "In addition to allowing consumers to better manage energy consumption, the system gives more transparency to daily expenses through real-time information. The flexibility in the acquisition and payment of energy, elimination of collecting fines, late and reconnection fees and savings in the household budget through changes in consumption habits are other benefits that can be utilised by the consumer. The distributor is expected to benefit from reduced operating costs, reduced bad debt and improved relationships between the company and its consumers; to avoid inconveniences generated by reading errors for estimated billings, undue interruption and reconnection problems.

"Although the prepayment is a measure available to all, those we know will especially reach consumers who are often in the cut list of distributors for lack of payment," says Bisagatto. With the new



method, these consumers will be able to set goals to better plan and manage their consumption and spending on electricity. "They will have better management of their consumption, since they can purchase credits in small quantities and at any time," he clarifies.

For the system to work properly, distributors must provide credits for sale via various types of establishments. The consumer must be able to buy them, for example, in supermarkets, drugstores and newsstands. In the event of the exhaustion of their credits, they may request the emergency credit from the distributors, to be deducted from their next recharge.

Some of the DSOs consider the model proposed by the regulator as having serious limitations from a financial and economic perspective. For this reason, there are no immediate projects planned for prepaid metering currently within Copel

(Companhia Paranaense de Energia), the DSO servicing the Paraná area of Brazil. With 3.8 million consumers in 393 municipalities across the state, Copel is one of the largest utilities in Brazil. A similar philosophy is currently being applied at Celpe, which serves 2.9 million customers in Pernambuco state.

Says Bruno Kleinau: "We have been waiting for the new regulations to come out regarding prepaid metering before putting any plans in place. Additionally, until there are prepaid meters approved by INMETRO, we cannot proceed with a meter rollout.

"I believe that we should adopt a policy of integrated smart grid to optimise energy use at peak times. This policy could encourage the use of alternative sources of generation to consumers. It is necessary to consider alternatives for the country that are not as depend on weather conditions as hydropower."



Smart is, however, a different matter altogether. According to Marco Hamerschmidt of Copel: "We have applied the philosophy of smart-systems rather than smart meters. We believe that the inclusion of intelligence and technology in meters raises the value of equipment and extrapolates the values limit supported by the Brazilian market. Since 2010, Copel has adopted a standard that all meters purchased must include a serial port. This feature allows the execution of AMR and revenue protection projects."

The southern Brazilian state has launched the most advanced pilot for smart grids in the country by trialling network automation and remote metering of energy, water and gas.

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